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ABSTRACT

In a study of masters program course work, questionnaires were sent to masters degree candidates in history at the University of New South Wales and at Macquaire University. Responses from 45 students were analyzed to determine who was attracted to the program and why, the expectations of the students, the organization of the program, and the commitment of the students. General characteristics of the students were identified in terms of occupation, sex, geographic location, and qualifications. The motives and expectations examined included: reasons for undertaking the program; the importance of personal, professional, and vocational development; academic aspirations; and the attractions of a coursework program. Causes and some solutions to attrition were assessed. The study concluded that the courses offer (1) flexibility, (2) topics not available to undergraduates, (3) limited commitment (without a thesis), and (4) relevance. Sample questionnaire forms are appended. (PHR)

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Continuing Education at the Postgraduate Level

A Study of the 1977 Candidates in the MA (pass) History Programme at U.N.S.W., including Reference to a Similar Group at Macquarie University.

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MARGOT PEARSON

January 1978

Tertiary Education Research Centre
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1. Introduction

In recent years there has been a considerable expansion in opportunities for higher degree studies in Australian universities. However, the rate of growth is greater for course work masters than for research higher degrees. In 1968 only slightly more than one fifth of all higher degree enrolments were in course work masters, in 1975 the proportion had risen to over one third. The numbers involved reflect this growth. Enrolments in course work masters have risen from 2,027 in 1968 to 6,029 in 1975.[1]

The Australian Universities Commission in its Sixth Report discusses the growth of higher degree programmes, and course work masters in particular, at some length. The Commission concludes that course work programmes are to be encouraged.

> In the first place, course work degrees provide a practical job-oriented advanced qualification for many first degree graduates with generalist degrees who previously may not have been able to take advantage of higher degree study. This undoubtedly provides the opportunity for many to improve their employment prospects. Secondly, some course work degrees are specifically designed as refresher or diversification courses and thus are closely related to the Commission's support for the development of continuing education at university level. Thirdly, growth in course work programs is likely to help to reduce the growth of research degree numbers by offering students an alternative type of higher degree course and thus permit a greater selectivity on the part of universities in accepting research students.[2]

1.1 M.A. Programmes at U.N.S.W.

A survey of the Faculty Handbooks of the University of New South Wales reveals that there is a wide range of course work masters being offered at this institution, but these course work masters programmes are not uniform. Some masters degrees are awarded at pass level only, some are awarded at the pass and Honours level. A few courses are full-time only, most can be taken full-time or part-time. The usual duration of a programme is for one year full-time or two years part-time as a minimum.

Requirements for eligibility also vary. The Science Masters programmes e.g. Master in Physics, require first or second class honours or a qualifying exam, except for the newly introduced Master of Science and Society programme which allows candidates to substitute professional experience for Honours. The Master of Commerce (pass) and the Master of Business Administration programmes likewise recognise work experience in lieu of Honours.

In the Faculty of Arts course work M.A.s are awarded at the pass level after completing the course part-time or full-time. The programmes require a B.A. of the candidates except for the M.A. (pass) Maths which requires a Dip.Ed. or equivalent experience as well.

1.2 M.A. (pass) History Programmes

The M.A. (pass) History programme (M.A.P.H.P.) which began in 1977 is similar to the existing masters programmes in the Faculty of Arts. Candidates have to have three years of History or some approved alternative. They are required to take five courses (one session each) and submit a short thesis embodying original research. One of the five courses, on historiography, is compulsory.

In 1977 20 candidates for the M.A.P.H.P. U.N.S.W. were admitted from a field of 80 applicants. The extent of the response to the new programme, while very encouraging, made selection more difficult for the M.A. Committee, the body constituted by the School of History to administer the M.A.P.H.P. The response also raised questions about the type of people who were attracted by the new programme and whether such a level of demand could be expected to continue. The need to select effectively from such a large field also led to interest in what was characteristic about the candidates selected by the methods used in 1977, basically a system of giving weightings for academic qualifications. (See Tables IV and V) Furthermore since 1977 was the first year of operation there was interest in how the courses functioned, how the candidates reacted to the programme and whether they persisted.

1.3 The T.E.R.C. Study of the Programme

In view of the interest in the programme in its first year T.E.R.C. undertook a study of the M.A.P.H.P. in 1977 for the M.A. Committee. In a memorandum to the M.A. Committee in February the brief of the study was set out as follows:

[To find out]

1. What sort of people were attracted to the programme - and why.
2. What is characteristic about those undertaking the programme in 1977.
3. What are the expectations of these 20 candidates.
4. How far do these 20 candidates find the programme satisfactory.
   - fulfilling their expectations
   - changing their expectations

   (This would include follow-up of anyone who dropped out during the year.)
5. Something about organisational details. How satisfactory were they?
6. The level of commitment of the students - how much time and effort they wanted to put in and whether this matched their teachers' expectations.

In the course of the year two oral reports were made to the M.A. Committee. Some information was also made available to the candidates who had co-operated very positively in the study. The reports contained much information about the courses in the programme which was of interest mainly to the committee and those teaching in the programme. It is not

proposed to include such aspects of course evaluation in this report. Rather this report is concerned with the characteristics of the candidates in 1977, their reasons for doing this programme and the significance of this for this programme and others like it.

To improve the usefulness of this report, which would otherwise be based on one case study only, further information has been used from details furnished by other masters programmes at U.N.S.W. and from a limited investigation of the candidates in the M.A.(pass) History programme at Macquarie University.

1.4 Data Collection

To gather information from the candidates a questionnaire and interviews were used.

i. Questionnaire (Appendix 1)

The questionnaire was administered at the first meeting of the M.A.P.H.P. classes in Session 1. Fifteen candidates completed the form and a further two did so later, giving a total of 17 out of 20 responding.

ii. Interviews

The questionnaire was followed up by individual interviews with the candidates over the next three months. Thirteen candidates were interviewed and the interviews taped. One late arrival was interviewed much later in July.

Telephone contact was made with three other candidates. One spoke briefly about his reasons for discontinuing. Two candidates gave an interview by phone, leaving the investigator with notes but no taped version of the interview. However, their replies were full and they have been included in the study, giving a total of 16 interviews to draw on.

iii. Interview Schedule

The interviews were unstructured initially. The opening was 'How's the course going?' Further clarifying and probing questions were used as necessary. If they had not been covered already, a series of specific items were raised. These were: demands of time, views on a reading course, the diversity of the proposed courses,

financial support, views on seminars, expectations for course and further clarification of reasons for doing the programme. Not all interviewees addressed themselves to the same concerns so that the total responding to different items varies (see Section 3).

iv. Informal Contact

Informal contact was maintained by the investigator with the staff and candidates throughout.

v. Official Documents

Official applications and transcripts were used to compile the general characteristics of applicants.

1.5 Macquarie University M.A.(pass) History Programme

A questionnaire similar to that used at the beginning of 1977 at U.N.S.W. was administered to the six different M.A. classes at their evening meetings in September and October 1977 at Macquarie University (Appendix II). Twenty-eight forms were completed. Initial enrolment at Macquarie University was 57. Of these 44 actually began classes and by October the number was down to 25.

2. General Characteristics of the Candidates and Applicants, U.N.S.W. 1977

The group of 20 candidates chosen by the M.A. Committee were well qualified academically, predominantly male and from a variety of occupations.

2.1 Distribution by Occupation

Table 1

Distribution of M.A.P.H.P. Applicants and Candidates at U.N.S.W. 1977 by Sex and Occupation

	Applicants M	Applicants F	All applic-ants	Candid-ates M	Candid-ates F	All Candid-ates
Law	6	0	6	2	0	2
Teaching * (Secondary and post-secondary)	18	11	29	6**	0	6
Library work	3	6	9	2	2	4
Administrative work, Public Service, Business etc.	10	8	18	4	3	7
Students	8	5	13	0	1	1
Unemployed	3	0	3	0	0	0
Home Duties	0	2	2	0	0	0
Totals	48	32	80	14	6	20

(*) Includes only practising teachers.

(**) Includes two tertiary teachers.

The distribution of occupations given in Table I shows that a varied group applied for the M.A.P.H.P. This is especially so as the category 'Administrative work etc.' includes many different positions, a storeman-packer and senior administrators. However, since all applicants had at least a B.A. most were in professional or white-collar jobs of some sort.

The candidates too, had a varied occupational background, but it emerged in interviews that all but four were working in educational institutions or research libraries. This was not a factor in their selection, but was a factor in their motivation.

The question that arises is whether so many applicants who are not professionally involved in historical work of some kind will continue to apply. There could possibly be something of a backlog of those wanting such a course to explain the rush of applicants in 1977. A lessening of demand may be expected from 1978.

2.2 Distribution by Sex (Table 1)

Fewer women than men applied for the M.A.P.H.P. and even fewer proportionately were chosen for the programme.

It is noticeable that only two women who work at home applied. Such women might have been expected to be looking for intellectual stimulation or a way to re-enter the workforce.

2.3 Geographic Factors

Most applicants were from Sydney. Only seven were from elsewhere in Australia or abroad. Most too, had received their B.A. at one of the Metropolitan Universities.

Table II

University which Granted First Degree

N = 80

	Unaccepted N = 51	Refused Offer N = 9	Accepted N = 20	Total
N.S.W.	22	4	8	34
Sydney	16	1	7	24
Macquarie	3	0	0	3
Other	10	4	5	19

The preponderance of U.N.S.W. and Sydney degrees could be a reflection of the importance of geographic proximity in choice of institution attended. Twelve of the candidates lived in the Eastern Suburbs, only four lived North of the harbour, while 39 of the applicants were from the Eastern Suburbs, the inner-West and the City and only 16 lived North of the harbour. The importance of proximity of the University to work or home is especially important given that the M.A.P.H.P. is a part-time undertaking for most candidates and courses are held in the evening. When giving reasons for undertaking the programme in the initial questionnaire, three candidates mentioned this. Three candidates worked at U.N.S.W.

2.4 Qualifications

Although the advertisement for the M.A.P.H.P. indicated that majors other than History would be considered, most applicants were History majors. Of the two candidates accepted with other majors, one had majored in Asian Civilization and the other in Political Science and was currently employed in historical research.

Table III

Background in History of Applicants 1977

N = 80

	Unaccepted N = 51	Refused offer N = 9	Accepted N = 20	Total
Major in History	42	4	18	64
Non-Major in History	9	4	2	14
Not Known	0	1	0	1

Academic qualifications are summarised in Tables IV and V.

Table IV

Bachelor Qualifications of Applicants 1977

N = 80

	Unaccepted N = 51	Refused Offer N = 9	Accepted N = 20	Total
B.A.	48*	6	10	64
Hons.	3	3	7	13
Eligible for Hons.	0	0	3	3
Totals	51	9	20	80

* 2 = B of Social Work.

Table V

Extra Qualifications of Applicants 1977

N = 80

	Unaccepted N = 51	Refused Offer N = 9	Accepted N = 20	Total
LLB	4	1	3	8
Dip.Ed.	15	4	5	24
Dip.Lib.	4	1	3	8
Other Bachelor or Diploma Courses	6	1	7	14
Other Masters	0	1	2	3
No Other Qualif.	21	1	3	25

Among the candidates it is of interest that three were eligible to do Honours but chose to do an M.A. instead. There are implications here for the degree structure. Is the M.A.(pass) a substitute for Honours or is it, as a course work masters, a substitute for a masters by research, as suggested by the Australian Universities Commission?

The number of extra qualifications held by the applicants, and particularly the candidates, would indicate that there are some people who like formal education and move from one programme to another. Significantly, of the nine who refused offers to do the M.A.P.H.P., seven are known to have started other postgraduate degree courses.

3. Motives and Expectations of the Candidates at U.N.S.W.

The discussion that follows is restricted to those candidates who responded to the March questionnaire and who were subsequently interviewed. Since of the 20 candidates, 17 completed the questionnaire and 16 were interviewed, it is unlikely that the views of the three who did not co-operate would change what follows, especially as two began in second session and have since withdrawn - giving reasons which were available to the investigator.

3.1 Reasons for Undertaking the M.A.P.H.P.

The candidates' reasons for undertaking the M.A.P.H.P. have been discussed before with the M.A. Committee. In this report the categories to be discussed have been organised to make the data comparable with that from Macquarie University. The intention is to provide a way of looking at the candidates' motivation that is not specific to the initial case study.

The categories used are:

Vocational Development - to improve employment and promotion prospects in a given field, to prepare for a specific job or promotion.

Professional Development - to improve one's competency in a position held or hoped to be held, to improve one's qualifications and hence status in an existing position. (This may lead to career advancement but this is not the main motive.)

Self-Development - to develop one's own interests, intellectual stimulation.

These categories are not exclusive, one candidate can give reasons that fit more than one category. Using these categories the reasons for doing the M.A.P.H.P. as given in the questionnaire administered in March by occupations of candidates, are given in Table V1.

Table VI

Reasons for Undertaking M.A.P.H.P. by Occupations of Candidates

N = 16

Occupation	Vocational Development	Prof. Development	Personal Development
Teacher (5)	0	3	5
Librarian (3)	0	0	3
Administrative (6)	3	1	5
Other* (2)	1	0	2
Total (16)	4	4	15

* Two categories have been collapsed to avoid identifying individuals.

The most frequent type of reason given in the questionnaire was personal development. That this was for at least half of the candidates, the main reason is clear if we put aside those who gave another reason. There was no consistent connection between occupation and reasons given

3.2 Reasons as Expressed in the Interviews

Subsequent discussion with the candidates in the interviews confirmed the findings shown in Table VI. Personal development, often expressed as a keen interest in history for its own sake, was the reason given most often and for ten of the sixteen was given as the main reason.

3.3 Personal Development

Given its importance, it is worth investigating further what personal development meant to the candidates. It could mean the intellectual stimulation of being involved in a university course and meeting the challenge of the work. For some it meant a bit more. Three candidates felt this programme was a way of proving themselves, of proving their intellectual capacity.

Five students looked to the M.A.P.H.P. to provide further liberal education and hence the attraction of history. This attraction of history was most clearly stated thus:

> I don't think anyone can call themselves really educated in the fullest sense of the word until they've studied history.*

Of course, a reasonable question here is why did they not just read in their spare time? Two candidates referred to this directly saying as one put it: [you need] 'The framework of doing it in a formal way.' A further indication of interest in history for its own sake was the presence of three students who said they had once wanted to be professional historians. They had not done so for a variety of reasons and were now doing the M.A.P.H.P. to further their interest in history without any intention of pursuing it past the M.A. level.

3.4 The Attraction of a Coursework Programme

An important attraction of a coursework M.A. for those interested in personal development, as most were to some extent, proved to be the social contact Seven candidates referred to this contact as important, and discussion of the seminars produced comments such as that seminars allowed a 'brushing of minds', 'an exchange of ideas', 'a sitting down with others and thinking' and 'I wanted something to share with people'. The diversity of background of the group was an advantage here. One teacher saw the M.A.P.H.P. as a way to meet other non-teachers and one administrative worker saw this a a chance to get out of 'one's slot'. Only two candidates found the seminars an unsatisfying way to learn.

Coursework has other attractions. It does not seem such a big commitment or responsibility. One candidate referred to the M.A.P.H.P. as being in nice 'bite size' pieces that you could do six months at a time at leisure. Coursework also provides discipline. Two candidates had previously failed to complete an M.A. thesis.

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* Quotes are verbatim from the transcripts of interviews.

3.5 Professional Development

Professional development was given as a reason by four of the candidates, and for one it can be seen as the main reason. However, it was noticeable that only three of the teachers gave professional development as a reason for doing the M.A. programme. One teacher was not a history teacher so this was not surprising, but another teacher who did teach history, saw the M.A.P.H.P. as a complete break from his work and did not want it to be professional development.

3.6 Academic Aspirations

Motives that could be categorised as professional or vocational development were the academic aspirations of a group of candidates. During the interviews it became clear that some candidates had hopes that they were not ready to write on a questionnaire but which had helped them decide to try the M.A.P.H.P. Two hoped to use the M.A.P.H.P. as a second chance to gain admittance to a Ph.D. programme, though one candidate was not sure if he would take up the option if it eventuated. Another candidate besides these two wanted to pursue research but without intending to give up his present job.

Three candidates (including one mentioned already in this section) had chosen to do the M.A.P.H.P. instead of Honours in History. Two did so because it was part-time and therefore a more feasible proposition given their work commitments. One candidate felt the M.A.P.H.P. would be less pressured and added that outside Australia an M.A. had a currency which was not the case with Honours. We appear to have here an interesting case of students using a programme to meet needs which the programme was not designed to meet. It also raises the question again of where the M.A.(pass) fits in the degree structure.

3.6 Vocational Development

Vocational development was not seen as an important reason by most candidates. Only one candidate entered the M.A.P.H.P. with a definite career goal in mind. Another three wanted the formal qualifications to improve their career opportunities in a more general way.

The situation as regards vocational aspirations is clearer if we look at the occupational groupings in turn and see what career advantage could be gained from a M.A.(pass) in History.

Of the five teachers, two were in tertiary institutions, two were subject masters in high Schools and the fifth had completed a diploma course that had given him as much promotion as he could ever expect. Furthermore, it is known that promotion in the state school system follows fixed procedures that cannot be short-cut by gaining extra qualifications. Besides classroom effectiveness is considered a more important criterion than formal qualifications. (This does not hold for private schools.)

For the librarians an M.A. in History has no immediate career advantage which is also true for those in administrative positions. Moreover, for these, and indeed for all occupational groupings, there are in existence vocationally oriented masters programmes. Teachers can do a Masters in Education, Librarians can do a Masters in Library Science, administrative workers can do a Masters in Commerce or Public Administration and lawyers can do a Master of Law. That these candidates chose instead to do a Master of Arts in History is an indication that they were genuinely interested in general, liberal education.

This does not mean that the candidates were without any regard for career advantage. For if interest were the only reason we could ask why they did not do W.E.A. or some adult education course. One candidate actually referred to this and said that she could not take W.E.A. courses because she knew the people who taught them. Since all the candidates had a B.A. already they were looking for courses of substance which were academically respectable. For the candidates all took the M.A.P.H.P. very seriously and were aware of the prestige attached to being enrolled for as well as achieving an M.A. It is significant here that thirteen of the candidates worked in educational institutions where formal academic qualifications are seen as conferring status.

They were aware too that formal accredited courses were able to open options for the future. This was more important to some than to others. Probably a majority had the idea somewhere in the back of their minds that it all <u>might</u> lead somewhere or saw further study as a way of coping with present dissatisfaction, personal and work-related. Even with interview data it is difficult to be sure as emphases vary and not all candidates can be expected to have disclosed all their aspirations, even when they knew for sure what they were themselves. The group as a whole, though, do seem very similar in career attitudes to a group of mature students studied by Challis in England. He concluded that:

> Although the boredom of their jobs may have triggered their decision, career advancement was seen as a possible outcome of the course rather than a driving reason; the emphasis lay on improving themselves 'as people', as one of them phrased it. [3]

3.8 Expectations for M.A.P.H.P.

We might anticipate that the expectations of such a group of candidates and their reactions to the M.A.P.H.P. would reflect their motivations. Particularly, we could anticipate that enjoying the 'doing' of courses would be very important. One candidate expressed this as follows:

> I mean, I would have dropped out, I mean considering the workload and all that if it had been boring, that would have been the one criterion if it had been boring. Because there's not much point in doing it if it's going to bore me, not at this stage when it hasn't any practical application, which it hasn't.

Another said:

> Basically I'm here to enjoy it and that's what I'm doing at the moment.

From the interviews it was clear that the candidates wanted an interesting, challenging course. Few were interested in short-cuts to gain the degree in minimum time. For example, the diversity of course offerings pleased many. Nine said they preferred the diversity to having a theme, (5 would have liked a theme or major) although a theme would probably lessen the overall workload. One candidate said: "You just do a lot of interesting things." When they realised that to finish in two years would be very difficult, all but three (and one candidate who was taking the programme full-time)adjusted their plans to accommodate three or four years, as doing too much at once meant you could not enjoy it.

> If you're doing something for the pleasure of it then I think if you overwork yourself, you're not going to enjoy it.

Often implicit in comments on the M.A.P.H.P. were comparisons with undergraduate work. One candidate said that people were taking the work very seriously and that no-one goes to sleep as "There's no point in going if you're going to go to sleep.". Another candidate talked of how to 'get by' in a B.A. course, particularly one that was taken 'to fill a session', and contrasted that with the M.A. courses where everyone was motivated, "everybody's here because they want to be".

The candidates were asked if they would be interested in full-time study on a scholarship. Eight candidates pointed out that no scholarship would be adequate, another five said they would not want to even if the scholarship was sufficient as they liked doing both their work and the M.A.P.H.P. One candidate referred to the possibility of 'getting isolated in a university environment'.

As was mentioned earlier, the candidates had positive attitudes towards seminar work. When asked if they would like a reading course instead of one of the session courses, opinion was divided. Seven liked the idea but another seven reacted negatively because it meant missing out on the discussion and the social contact that they valued.

3.9 Summary

It seems then, that the candidates have undertaken the M.A.P.H.P. for a variety of reasons, the combination of which varied from individual to individual but that personal development was important to all and very important for the majority. Consequently, most candidates were not in a great hurry to finish in preparation for something else. Satisfaction was to come from doing the programme as much as gaining the degree. Career advancement was seen as a possible outcome.

4. Attrition

Of the 20 candidates beginning the programme, nine have discontinued. The investigator has spoken with seven of the nine. In all cases the reasons for discontinuing are complex personal reasons that vary according to individual circumstances. In two cases dissatisfaction with the programme are combined with other pressures. In other cases it seems to be family commitments, pressures of time and so on. What can be said is that for those who undertook the programme for personal development primarily, which is the case for five of the seven who have been interviewed about this, if pressures become too great they are likely to discontinue as the point of the exercise is to enjoy it.

This does not necessarily mean that because so many candidates are interested in personal development, the attrition will be greater. There are not sufficient numbers or experience to warrant this conclusion at this time. Nor is the attrition rate very high in comparison with other M.A. programmes.[4]

4.2 Possible Ways to Reduce Attrition

It could be argued that the way to reduce attrition to avoid giving competitive places to people who then discontinue, would be to select more rigourously. However, at this time, it is not known whether any category of reasons for undertaking M.A.P.H.P. correlates more significantly with persistence. Nor is it clear whether higher academic standards would achieve more efficient selection as the 1977 candidates were chosen on academic criteria.

One candidate who discontinued found the course difficult to cope with for reasons that involved family commitments and the pressures of part-time work. He suggested that since all applicants were graduates and therefore of proven capability, more stress ought to be put on counselling. As a counsellor, he said, he would put more stress on an applicant's personal environment and what was involved. Certainly at least three of those discontinuing would probably never have begun if they had had a clearer idea of what was involved in terms of workload, organisation of courses and responsibility for seminar work. Giving more opportunity to applicants to self-select themselves is an approach that is likely to be appropriate where motivation to persist rather than academic ability is likely to determine who discontinues.

4.3 Women Candidates

It is disturbing to note that of the six women candidates, four have discontinued. Again, the numbers are too small and experience too limited to reach any conclusions as yet.

5. Candidates in the M.A.(pass) History Programme at Macquarie University Compared with the Candidates in M.A.P.H.P. U.N.S.W.

Like the University of New Wouth Wales, Macquarie University offers a course work masters programme at the pass level in the Schools of Politics, Philosophy and History. The history courses are part-time and held in the evening. The minimum time for completion is three years and the maximum is six years. Until recently the programme was seen to be mainly for teachers and a Dip.Ed. or equivalent professional qualification was required besides a B.A. It was decided to investigate this group of masters candidates in 1977 as a means of checking whether the candidates at U.N.S.W. were exceptional or not.

5.1 Data Scurces

In the discussion that follows a number of different sources of information are used. The data concerning qualifications and university where first degree was granted came from Student Records for the 57 enrolling candidates in 1977. Information about withdrawals and sex distribution came from staff of the History masters programme for the 44 attending classes. The detailed information about occupation and motivation came from the questionnaire administered to the candidates in 1977. (Appendix II) Twenty-eight candidates completed the form, and since by the end of October withdrawals left 25 candidates, this seems a reasonably complete sample from which to draw certain conclusions, though not, of course, about reasons for withdrawal as the respondents were the persisters.

5.2 Macquarie University Enrolments in History Masters Programme

Since the Macquarie programme has been going since 1969 there are candidates who began in 1977 and those who are some part-way through the programme included in this survey. Fifty-one candidates enrolled in the beginning of 1977 but 44 actually attended classes. Of these, 25 were women and 19 men.

From Table VII it can be seen that the Macquarie candidates have attended a greater variety of tertiary institutions, although mainly in New South Wales.

Table VII

University which granted first degree for all enrolments in Macquarie History course work Masters in 1977

N = 51

University	Number of enrolments
Macquarie	10
Sydney	14
N.S.W.	5
New England	10
Newcastle	3
Other	9
Total	51

The qualifications of those enrolling at Macquarie for the History masters are set out in Table VIII.

TABLE VIII

Qualifications of Candidates enrolling at Macquarie University for History Coursework Masters in 1977

Qualification	All Enrolments N = 51	Candidates Responding to Questionnaire N = 28
B.A.	49	26*
Dip.Ed. or equiv.	31	15
Other Bachelors	6	7
Other Diploma	4	2
Masters	4	1
Qualif. other than B.A. and Dip.Ed.	9	7

* Four had B.A. Honours
Two had a Bachelor of Divinity but no B.A.

As is to be expected, more of the Macquarie candidates who enrolled had a Dip.Ed. or equivalent. Only 20% of those enrolling at Macquarie University had qualifications other than a B.A. or B.A. and Dip.Ed. or equivalent, whereas 50% of the candidates at U.N.S.W. (and 29% of the applicants) had such extra qualifications.

5.3 Women Candidates

The most noticeable difference between the Macquarie candidates and those at U.N.S.W. is that the majority at Macquarie were women. Of the 44 Macquarie candidates who attended classes in 1977, 25 were women and 19 were men. This contrasts with U.N.S.W. where 14 candidates were men and six women. Even among the applicants at U.N.S.W. the majority were men. This establishes that there is a greater demand for graduate study from women than the U.N.S.W. experience would indicate. Particularly as

reference to Table X shows that women working at home or combining home duties and part-time work were a sizeable group. This was the group unrepresented at U.N.S.W., among candidates and among applicants (except for two). The explanation for the difference at the two institutions is beyond the scope of this report.

5.4 Occupation

Apart from the differences discussed above, the candidates at Macquarie were, as expected from its past orientation, predominantly teachers. The only other distinct groups were women working at home and three ministers of religion whose presence can be explained by the Ancient History courses offered. U.N.S.W. History School offers only Modern History.

5.5 Reasons given by Candidates at Macquarie for doing the Coursework Masters in History

The reasons given for doing the Macquarie programme as given by the candidates responding to the questionnaire are summarized in Table X. It cannot be demonstrated that this group of 28 was representative of the initial 44 or 51 enrolling. However, as they were mostly the persisters, they were those students of most interest.

TABLE X

Reasons given by candidates for doing M.A.(pass) History at Macquarie by Occupation

N = 28

Occupation	Vocational	Prof.Dev.	Self.Dev.	Prereq. Entry M.A.Hons	No Prof. adv.	Total no candidates
H.S. Teacher	1	7	7	1	4	9
Post Secondary teaching	0	1	2	0	2	3
Minister of Religion	0	3	2	1	2	3
P/T Teaching or research	2	3	3	0	1	5
Home Duties	1	4	5	0	2	6
Other	0	0	2	0	0	2
Totals	4	18	21	2	11	28

* The way to do this is set out in the Postgraduate handbook for Macquarie University.

The responses given by the Macquarie candidates were very similar to the responses of the candidates at U.N.S.W., and when summarized into the categories given in Table X a pattern emerges that is consistent with that of the M.A.P.H.P. The most frequent type of reason given was self-development and next most frequent was professional development. Few candidates gave vocational reasons.

The greater emphasis on professional development presumably arises from there being more teachers among the Macquarie candidates. But as at U.N.S.W. there is no obvious and consistent connection between occupation and reasons for doing the programme. Take, for example, the nine high school teachers. Although most were taking the programme for a combination of personal and professional reasons, one teacher wanted to improve his employment and promotion prospects while another four said the programme was of no professional advantage, as did the two post-secondary teachers.

The group who were most interested in professional development, shading into a desire to improve employment and promotion prospects were the women working at home or part-time. Only three explicitly mentioned their vocational aspirations but two of the women working at home were doing casual relief teaching and their interest in professional development could be linked to preparation for re-entering the workforce full-time when they were ready. Out of the eleven candidates working at home or combining this with part-time teaching or research only three said the course was of no professional advantage.

From the responses of the Macquarie candidates a clearer picture of professional development emerged. There were specific references to changes in the Ancient History high school syllabus which had made more knowledge of the Ancient Near East necessary. Another candidate wanted a more in-depth background for senior history teaching. There was, too, a good example of someone using the M.A. programme to develop an interest allied to his professional concerns. A chemistry teacher at the post-secondary level had been involved in the technical work in numismatics and had come via this to Ancient History.

The two candidates at Macquarie involved in non-teaching occupations, excluding the ministers and those who were working at home, were both interested in personal development. One was a nurse and one was a public servant. But, interestingly, the public servant stated that what began as a course for interest had turned out to be of career advantage and could lead to promotion at work. This is a good example of what some U.N.S.W. candidates were hoping might happen.

Overall, as at U.N.S.W., the candidates studied were mainly undertaking the Masters programme at Macquarie for professional and/or personal development with

only four giving vocational reasons and eleven stating explicitly that the programme had no professional advantage. The candidates persisting at Macquarie would seem to be, as were the U.N.S.W. candidates, interested in liberal education at the graduate level, and probably wanting it in a formal accredited course for reasons similar to those discussed for the U.N.S.W. candidates.

An interesting question here is just how widespread the demand for such programmes could be estimated to be. This report does not attempt to answer this, it really is rather an attempt to provide some picture of those undertaking the existing programmes. However, a further indication (besides the numbers applying for the programmes discussed in this report) of potential demand is the response to the Master of General Studies programme that also began in 1977 at U.N.S.W. This too, is a coursework masters that has no direct professional orientation as has, for example, the Master of Library Science. In 1977 a large group from diverse occupations enrolled as is shown below in Table XI.

TABLE XI

Occupations of Candidates for a Masters in General Studies in 1977

Occupation	No. of Candidates
Teaching	17
Work in Media or Media Resources	5
Public Service/Clerical/ Administrative	9
Business/self-employed professionals	6
Library work	3
Student/unemployed	5
Other	2
Total	47

Although candidates working in the media might be attracted professionally by the courses offered in this programme, candidates whose occupations range from a law lecturer, an accounts clerk, a clothing retailer and a probation and parole officer for example, do not seem to have any obvious professional or vocational orientation.

6. Discussion

This report has studied the characteristics and motivations of the candidates in the M.A.P.H.P. at U.N.S.W., including a limited comparison with candidates in a similar programme at Macquarie University. From this study we can build some sort of picture of the M.A.P.H.P. programme as it appears to these candidates. What does it offer? It is flexible in hours, structure (course work) and length of programme (2-7 years). There are five different courses that are on modern interdisciplinary topics that would not all have been available to undergraduates. It is a limited commitment because you do a bit at a time. It is 'higher degree study' with all the varied attractions of that term, but not as daunting as a thesis M.A. There are classes and guidance and companionship. If we look at the programme like this from the consumers' perspective it is very attractive for those who want further education in a subject of general interest like history but who do not want to become professional historians. It offers also many of the elements that advocates of continuing or life-long education are pressing for.

Much has been written in recent years about recurrent and continuing education. Instead of education being seen as a preparation for life or a job, education can be seen as part of a life-long process in which the distinctions between education, work and retirement begin to blur. Education becomes continuing in the form of 'updating' or 'refresher' courses for professionals who have to avoid obsolescence. In North America it is becoming common for such courses to be mandatory by State law.[5] Other continuing education courses are to help people retrain when their training or job skills are no longer needed or appropriate jobs are not available.

The concept of continuing education can also encompass courses taken by people for interest, for education has become a leisure item.[6] Adult education has always fulfilled this function but it has been seen as compensatory and is non-accredited. Its lower status comes from this division of education into that which is accredited and that which is not, for this division has tended, Duke points out, to "define other than full-time straight through education as less important and less desirable."[7] It may be that from this comes the tendency to consider education for interest or personal development as also of lower status. In an amusing critique of attitudes among staff towards continuing education at A.N.U., Haines questions the view that there is something inherently inferior about 'amateurs' and 'addicts', that they want titillation and are not serious.[8]

That such attitudes are common became clear during this study, common among candidates as well as staff. It explains, in part, why some candidates chose a regular, accredited M.A. programme for personal development. Particularly this was a factor for those attracted by the prestige of being enrolled in an M.A. programme and for those with ideas, however vague, that it might open options in the future.

What is more interesting in considering the implications of the concept of continuing education is that this course work M.A. programme is actually bridging these divisions. Not because it was set up to do this, but because of the way it is being used by the candidates. The mixture of reasons, with slightly different combinations and emphases from one candidate to another, led to this programme serving a variety of functions. It was used for professional updating, improving qualifications, improving job opportunities and as a leisure activity. The programme overall can be seen to fulfill one of the basic principles given in the O.E.C.D. checklist of basic principles to guide the elaboration of a recurrent education system:

> degrees and certificates should not be looked upon as an 'end result' of an educational career but rather as steps and guides towards a process of lifelong education, and lifelong career and personality development.[9]

In the introduction to this report reference was made to the views of the Australian Universities Commission. In considering new approaches to tertiary education the Commission supports the concept of recurrent education and states that "diversification of course, modes of learning and types of institutions should be fostered and the needs of new clienteles and students taken into account". More specifically the Commission continues:

> As far as continuing education is concerned, the new emphasis will re-inforce the importance of providing post-experience courses both of the formal post-graduate diploma and masters course work type and of the less formalised ad hoc variety.[10]

By providing a course which is open to flexible use and meeting the needs of a variety of candidates the Master of Arts (Pass) in History Programme is very positively in keeping with these recommendations.

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Footnotes

1. Australian Universities Commission (1975), Sixth Report Canberra: pp. 131-140.

2. Ibid. p. 145.

3. Challis, R. (1976) "The Experience of Mature Students", S.H.R. 1, 2:209-222.

4. For example in the M.A. (Pass) Maths programme at U.N.S.W. from 1973-1977 48% of the candidates have discontinued. Figures supplied by Dr. J.D. Gray of the School of Mathematics at the University of N.S.W.

5. For examples see: Australian Journal of Adult Education, 27, 2 (1977).

6. A view confirmed by the Vice-Chancellor of the Open University in Great Britain who sees a growing demand for education as a leisure occupation.
   Summary of a paper published in Higher Education 2, 2 (1973) p.176.

7. Duke, C. (1976) Life-Long Education: An Australian Prognosis, Occasional Paper No. 13, Canberra: Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, p.80.

8. Haines, N. (1972) "Inside the Margin - Some Academic Opinions on Continuing Education", pp. 79-98. in Haines, N. ed. Canberra Papers in Continuing Education (Series 1), Canberra: Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University.

9. Quoted in Duke, L. op.cit, p. 53.

10. Australian Universities Commission, op.cit, p.53.

Appendix I

UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
TERTIARY EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE

Questionnaire for Candidates in M.A. (Pass)
Programme 1977

1. People undertake higher degree studies for a number of reasons. Could you state briefly your reasons for undertaking this particular M.A. programme.

2. In what area or on what topic do you hope to do a thesis?

3. How much time do you expect to spend on this course each week outside of seminar meetings?

4. Do you expect to encounter any difficulties? (Such as: fitting in other commitments, travelling time, lack of background for particular topics, lack of training in historical skills, other...)

5. What are the particular advantages of this programme for you?

Appendix II

UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

TERTIARY EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE

Questionnaire for Candidates in M.A. (Pass) Programme 1977

1. What previous degrees and diplomas have you gained?

2. What is your present occupation? (Please be specific e.g. High School teacher.)

3. People undertake higher degree studies for a number of reasons. Could you state briefly your reasons for undertaking this particular M.A. programme?

4. What are the particular advantages for you in gaining an M.A. in History? (Both professional and non-professional.)

5. Have you any comments on such programmes?